

A
SCRIPTURE MANUAL:
OR,
A PLAIN REPRESENTATION
OF THE
ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM.

DESIGNED
FOR THE USE OF ALL WHO WOULD ANSWER
GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARDS GOD, AND GIVE A REASON OF
THEIR FAITH AND PRACTICE WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR.

BY SAMUEL WILSON.

TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED,
VARIOUS EXTRACTS FROM LEARNED PÆDOBAPTIST
AUTHORS.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.—John vi. 39

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PREFACE.

THE very extraordinary zeal which has lately been expressed from the pulpit and the press, for Infant Baptism as an *ordinance of God*, or of *unquestionable* and *divine authority*, put me on reviewing the evidence by which I was formerly convinced of the contrary.

And as I do not remember to have met with any thing on the subject, exactly in this form ; if it has no other advantage, it may point out a *method* of inquiry to those who make the word of God the rule of their faith and practice.

There are some few hints taken from modern authors ; but the main is the judgment I formed of these things at the time referred to.

I have only to add, I am not conscious of a wilful misinterpretation of any text, but have faithfully given what I apprehended to be the real sense of the Holy Ghost ; to whose influence and blessing I humbly recommend it.

S. W.

A

SCRIPTURE MANUAL,

&c. &c.

THAT Baptism is an *ordinance* of Jesus Christ is admitted by the generality of those who call themselves Christians. That it is of *standing use* in the church of God, appears from the nature* of the institution, when rightly understood, and the promise of the great Head of the church to his ministers, in the administration of it: "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*"

As this ordinance is distinguished from others, in its limitation to a *single* administration, without repetition, great care should be taken, that we act agreeably to the mind of Christ in it. What is to be done but once in the Christian's life, ought to be done well.

It is certain, men are apt to run into extremes. Some may possibly make *too much* of Baptism, supposing it to be a *regenerating*, or *sanctifying* ordinance; that it washes away the guilt of original sin, and is always accompanied with the conveyance of grace. Others may think meanly of it, as a mere circumstantial ritual, or test of obedience to a positive precept, with little, if any, spiritual meaning.

Nor are men, good and learned men, less divided about the *subjects* and *modes* of this sacred institution. If this arose from the obscurity, or ambiguity, of the terms in which it is revealed, it might carry the appearance of some reflection on the wisdom of the Lawgiver; it being a duty of common concern, in which the plainest Christian is as deeply interested, as men of the greatest capacity, or literature. But if it appear that God has not been wanting in this matter, and that the Scripture account of it is in

* A solemn acknowledgment of the divine glories, and a professed subjection to the authority of Father, Son, and Spirit, with a thankful recognition of the burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; in the view of which we desire to die unto sin, and live unto holiness.

terms of a determinate meaning, and easy to be understood ; whatever darkness may attend our minds, we have no room to quarrel with revelation.

It is now near thirty years since I first examined this matter ; and, I am sure, no one could enter into the inquiries with more earnest desire to find it on the side of the *common practice* ; all my conversation and prospects leaning strongly that way.

The method I took was, I hope, in a dependence on God, whose direction I earnestly implored, to collect the whole evidence of Scripture ; to consider carefully every part separately, that I might know what was his good and acceptable will in this service. And whether I should happily attain the desirable end or not, I remember I found great peace in the integrity of the determination. Accordingly, looking up to Heaven, I set myself to search the Scriptures.

The questions before me were, Whether *believers*, or persons professing faith and repentance, only ; or believers, and their *natural offspring* ; or *infants in common*, were the proper subjects of baptism ? And whether the manner of administration was by *immersion*, or *plunging* ; or, by *sprinkling* or, *pouring* ; or whether *either* might be used indifferently ?

Considering that Baptism is an ordinance peculiar to the Gospel-dispensation, I thought it most natural to expect an account of it in the New Testament. Accordingly, I began with the Gospel of St. Matthew ; and, in the third Chapter, met with the following description of John's baptism :—

“ In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ; and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. *That*, then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. *And that*, when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you, &c. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance ; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father,” &c.

Here I found, that John had a special commission given him, to preach and baptize—That the substance of his ministry was, the doctrine of repentance, in the view of the near approach of the Messiah. *Repent for the kingdom*.

of heaven is at hand—that his success was very extraordinary ; multitudes flocking after him, to hear him preach, and be baptized of him. *Jerusalem and all Judea, and the region round about, &c.* That the place of his preaching, was the wilderness ; and of his baptizing, the river Jordan.—That the action was baptizing—And, that the disposition of mind required in the subjects was *repentance* ; such repentance as should be productive of good fruits ; and that, where this was wanting, a relation to Abraham, as their father, did not entitle them to his baptism.

This appeared to me to be the sum of the account ; and I could not help observing, That there is no intimation of *children* being brought by their parents to John. Not a word of his baptizing them. No recommendation of this to their parents, as a duty to be afterwards performed by them, in consequence of their being proselyted to his doctrine. No hint of pouring, or sprinkling, but that John baptized the people *in* the river Jordan ; and that he did this on their repentance, or profession of it.

Thus far the evidence being for adult baptism, I proceeded to consider the baptism of our Lord, as described in the same Chapter, verse 13—16. “ ‘Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, to John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me ? and Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now ; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water,’ &c.

Here I observed, that our Lord did not send to John to come and baptize him ; but went himself from Galilee to Jordan, the place where John was baptizing ; and offered himself as a subject. John, apprehensive of his superior glory, modestly refuses. Our Lord insists on it, as a part of righteousness it became him to fulfil. John baptized him ; and, as Mark expressly says, (Chap. i, 9,) *in* the river Jordan ; and from that expression, *coming out* of the water, I concluded it was by *immersion*.

I took notice of a difference between this and the former account. Here was no preaching on John's part ; no repentance required of, or confessed by, our Lord Jesus, previous to baptism. These, the dignity and purity of his person rendered unnecessary. He had the richest unction

of the Holy Spirit ; and was holy, harmless, and undefiled. However, he appeared with great zeal to engage in the duty ; and I thought he spoke as the Head of the church, and example of his people, when he said, “ *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*”

The next place I consulted was, Matt. xix, 13, 14 ; compared with Mark x. 13, and Luke xviii. 15. “ Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray : and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me : for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” This I had often heard quoted in favour of Infant Baptism : and therefore, though I did not find the word *baptize* in the text, I thought it deserved a particular consideration. And the first thing which came before me, was the *desire* of the parents, or friends, of those children ; or what they aimed at in bringing them to Christ ; and the evangelist Matthew says it was, that he should *put his hands on them and pray*. Mark and Luke say, that he might *touch them*. But neither of them gives the least hint, as to any desire, or request, that they might be baptized.

I then considered the conduct of our Lord on this occasion : and the text says, “ *He took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.*” This, and no more, our Lord did at this time, that I could find, by comparing the Evangelists.—This led me to consider the reluctance of the disciples, that these children should be brought, and our Lord’s displeasure signified by his check of them, “ *Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*”

What the disciples’ reason was for opposing them, is not recorded. I think it could not be, from an *unwillingness* that infants should be *baptized*, had that been the practice of John, or the known will of their Master. This they could hardly be guilty of ; nor does our Lord take the least notice of it in his reproof. It is likely they were uneasy lest he should be interrupted in attending to matters which they judged of greater importance. But, however this was, I found they stood reproved ; and the reason given was, *for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

Here I considered, that *the kingdom of heaven* must intend, either the kingdom of grace, or of glory. And first I

began with the kingdom of *grace* ; and presently saw, that must either be the *invisible* church, or general assembly of the first born, whose names are written in heaven ; or *particular* churches, constituted in gospel-order : for I could have no notion of a *national* church, under the New Testament dispensation. Accordingly, I brought infants to each of these, endeavouring to come at the truth. As to the *invisible* church, consisting only, that I could see, of the election of grace ; I thought whether *all*, or *who*, among infants are a part of it, could only be known to God ; and this being a matter wholly unrevealed, I could not see how it could give them a right to Baptism.

As to *particular* churches, it did not appear that infants were *claimed* or *treated*, as members. Nor could I understand their capacity for membership ; which seemed to be founded in the New Testament, on a *declared agreement* of the saints, in principles and experience.

I then considered the kingdom of *glory*, consisting in the beatific vision, and enjoyment of God. And here I presently found my wishes out-run revelation ; and, in the issue, was obliged to leave infants to the sovereign mercy of him, who is the Judge of the earth, and will do nothing but what is right. Nor could I see, on the supposition of their being *all* admitted to that kingdom, of which I could find no *scripture* assurance, that their right to baptism was evinced, without a *special order*, from the Law-giver of the church, or some *necessary* connection between that ordinance and eternal life.

Musing on these things, I looked a little farther, and soon found the difficulty removed, and the expression cleared up, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven*. That is, as our Lord adds, “ *Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein ;*” or, as Luke has it, “ *in no wise enter therein.*”

It now appeared, that our Lord was speaking of the *temper*, and not merely of the persons of children ; and what greatly confirmed me was, a parallel passage, Matt. xviii. 2, 3. “ *Jesus called a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” And adds, “ *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is*

the greatest in the kingdom of heaven : and whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me ; and whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Here I compared the expressions, *receiving* Christ, and receiving one of these little ones making profession of *his name* ; and the little ones *believing in him*, with the dreadful nature of the threatening for offending them ; and I could not see how these could be applicable to mere infants, but were all well adapted to younger, or weaker Christians.

Upon the whole, after the strictest search, I could find, in these texts, nothing relating to Baptism. Nor could I help thinking, had it been the intention of our Lord that infants should be baptized, he would not have omitted the practices or some discourse about it, on occasions which seemed so naturally to lead him to it.

Failing of my hoped for discovery of Infant-Baptism here, I hastened to the *commission*, recorded Matt. xxvii. 18, 19, 20 ; compared with Mark xvi. 15, 16. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations ; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Struck with the supreme authority of a risen Jesus I concluded, from the solemnity of the introduction, it must be a very *heinous affront*, to *add, alter, or take away* from the sacred commandment. And with a mind, I trust, possessed with reverence of his Majesty, I entered into a meditation on the precept. —Here I found that the persons charged with the commission were the apostles ; who, notwithstanding the eminence of their character, and their divine inspiration, were not to *make*, but *publish* and *explain*, the laws of Christ. *That*, and only that, which they received of the Lord, were they to declare to the church. And from the nature of the duty enjoined, and the reach of the promise, even to the end of the world, I judged all gospel-ministers to be included in the commission.

The duty enjoined, or service to be performed, was, to

teach and baptize. Or, as I understood it, to make disciples by teaching, (for I could not think of any other way,) and then to baptize them.—The subjects of instruction and baptism, *were all nations* ; or, as Mark has it, *all the world*, and *every creature* ; Gentiles, as well as Jews. Not every individual ; for the absurdity of that was most glaring ; but such as were capable of receiving the doctrine, and making a profession of it, in order to baptism.

The *time* of baptizing, according to the evangelist Mark seemed to be when they *believed* ; or, as Matthew has it, when they were *taught*, or made disciples. And the *manner* in which, when I considered the principal, most common, and natural, sense of the word *Baptism*, with the use of it in John's baptism, appeared to me to be by immersion ; and I was the more confirmed in this from John's choosing a place to baptize in, where there was much water, John iii. 23. I tried, and tried, and tried again, to bring in infants under the general term, *all nations* ; but Mark's *believeth and is baptized*, with Matthew's *teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you*, obliged me to conclude it must be confined to the adult.

Thus far the balance seemed to be on the side of the Anti-pædobaptists. But, having determined, when I set out, to examine the whole evidence, I pursued the enquiry : and being thoroughly satisfied, that the apostles could not mistake their Master, I thought, if I was mistaken in my apprehension of his will, in the commission, I should be set right by their conduct. I began with Peter's sermon, Acts ii. The point the apostle aimed at, I found in verse 36. "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" In this he asserts the glory of the Person crucified ; he was Lord of all : and charges them directly with his murder ; they had crucified, or, with wicked hands, had slain him.

The effect was, "They were pricked to the heart, and cried out Men and brethren what shall we do ?" Upon which Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God sha^l

call." It is added, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them, about there thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." And (ver. 44) "All that believed were together and had all things common," &c.

Here I observed, how Peter understood his commission. He began with *preaching or teaching*—waiting for the success of his labour. Nor did I find a word of baptism, till they were *pricked in their heart*; then, indeed, and not before, he said, *Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*; which I understood after this manner; If you are indeed grieved and ashamed of your conduct towards this Jesus whom you have crucified; if you are convinced by the Spirit of God, that he is the promised Messiah, the great Redeemer and King of his church, and have a fiducial dependence on him for salvation: then you are to be baptized in his name, and may hope for a comfortable evidence, in your Baptism, of the remission of your sins, and that you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. And for their encouragement he adds, "*For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*"

Now, I thought the evidence of children's right to Baptism began to open; especially as I had often heard this verse mentioned as an incontestible proof of it. But being willing to see with my own eyes, I considered what this promise might be. The text, indeed, I found, if not wholly silent, yet not directly expressive. But, on close reflection I thought it must be either, the great promise of the Messiah, as the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations should be blessed! or, of the remission of sins, for his sake; or, of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Accordingly, I thought infants to each of these; and presently saw, as to the first, The great honour which was done to the Jews, and their offspring, that Christ should be allied to them according to the flesh; but found no reason to conclude, that Abraham's natural children were the children of the promise, as to the spiritual part of it. Nor could I see how the *general* promise of the Messiah, as the seed of Abraham, could give them a right to Baptism, if impenitent and uncalled, any more than the Gentiles, or

those afar off.—As to the promise of the remission of sins, I saw not how this could be claimed, but by *believers*. And, as to the gift of the Holy Ghost, if it was of the same kind with what had been lately poured out upon the Apostles, the thing spoke for itself; there was no room to expect it in a state of infancy.—*By children*, then, I apprehend, must be meant their *offspring*, when *called*; and then I could easily apply the promise to them, in any, or all, of the foregoing senses.

Upon the whole, I found, that Peter preached—the people repented, and gladly received the word—were baptized—added to the church—walked in fellowship—and encouragement was given to their offspring, that, with the same *experience*, or when called, they might look for the same privileges.—I could not but think, had the Apostle intended to express their right, as infants, to Baptism, it was *strange*, very *strange*, that no notice should be taken, either then, or afterwards, of the administration of it.

The next account of Baptism I met with, was Acts viii. 12. “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women.” Here I found the Evangelist agree with the Apostle, and both keeping close to the commission. Philip begins with preaching the Gospel, or, *things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ*. The people believed; and, *when* they did so, and not before, he baptized them. And they are said to be *men* and *women*; which phrase I took to be expressive of the extent, and limitation of the ordinance. Not men *only*, but men and *women*: not men, women, and *children*; but men and women *only*. And indeed, I thought it could not be otherwise, if a personal faith, and a profession of it, were pre-requisite to Baptism: and these I found were insisted on by the Evangelist, in the case of the Eunuch, recorded in the same chapter; the account of which stands thus:—

“The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go towards the south, &c. And he arose and went, and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an Eunuch, &c., who had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot, and read Esaias the prophet. Then the

Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? and he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, &c. The Eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee of whom spake the prophet this? &c. Then Philip opened his mouth, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the Eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.—And he commanded the chariot to stand still: And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the Eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” Acts viii. 26—39.

This appeared to me to be a plain and expressive account of the subjects and mode of Baptism. Philip begins with teaching and preaching Christ as a Saviour and Sovereign. The Eunuch desires to be baptized. Philip insists on a confession of his faith. The Eunuch gives him satisfaction. They both go out of the chariot, and Philip baptizes him. And I could not help observing the peculiarity of the phrases. They went down *both into* the water, *both* Philip and the Eunuch. And when they were *come up out* of the water: which strongly impressed my mind, that the baptism of the Eunuch was by *immersion*, and must be designed to describe something more than barely going to the side, or brink, of the water.

The next instance of baptism was that of Cornelius, recorded Acts x. And of him, it is said, (verse 2) he was a *devout man, and one that feared God with all his house*. Which I understood not of mere babes, if he had any; but of those who were, in some measure, grown up; capable, under a divine influence, of forming some apprehensions of the glory of God, and their obligations to revere and serve him. By the direction of an angel he sends to

Peter. Peter begins with preaching. God owns his ministry. The Holy Ghost falls on all those who heard the word ; and Peter asks, "*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized.*" Here I found the commission strictly regarded, and kept up to, and an exact conformity with the forementioned instances of Baptism : and, comparing the expressions *fearing God with all his house*, (ver. 2), and, *receiving the like gift with those who believed in the Lord Jesus*, (mentioned chap. xi. 17) I saw no reason to suppose that infants were of that number.

This led me to consider the conversion and baptism of Lydia, of whom we read, (Acts xvi. 14.) That she *was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, and heard the apostle ; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul ; and was baptized, and her household.* As to Lydia, I thought there could be no dispute, whether she believed before she was baptized ; the text asserting that she *worshipped God*, and that the *Lord opened her heart*.—As to her *household*, of whom it consisted, is not said ; nor is any notice taken of her husband, if she had any. All that appeared to me, from a careful examination of the account, was, That she was not at home, or in the place of her common residence ; that she came to sell her purple had a house for that purpose, and probably servants to assist her in her trade ; nor could I see it altogether consistent with prudence, to bring a family of young children, if she had any, into the hurries of business.—Upon the whole, I thought it might be such a house as Cornelius had ; who, if they did not fear God before, were converted by a blessing on the Apostle's ministry, and baptized with their mistress. And what greatly tended to confirm me in this was, that the persons the Apostle found in Lydia's house, when he entered into it, are called *brethren*, and were *comforted* by him ; which cannot be said of infants.

The account of the conversion of the Jailor and his family, contained in the same chapter is as follows : "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, &c. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, &c. The keeper of the prison would have killed himself. Paul cried with a loud voice, saying,

Do thyself no harm. The keeper called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved? and they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Acts xvi. 25—34. The fact here, I thought, stood thus: The Jailor, under the power of strong convictions, cries out, *What must I do to be saved?* The apostle answers, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house.* That is, as I understand it, if they also believe. Upon which they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And God blessing his word to the Jailor and his family, they *believed, were baptized, and rejoiced.*

This led me to consider what is said of Crispus and the Corinthians, Acts xviii. 8. *And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.* Here I found the master and the family, believers: and that the Corinthians *heard, believed, and were baptized.* And, as hearing and believing are mentioned, previous to the baptizing of the Corinthians, I concluded it was equally so, in the instance of Crispus and his house.

The last instance I met with was, in I. Cor. i. 14, 15, 16, which speaks of baptizing the household of Stephanas. "I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say, that I had baptized in mine own name: and I baptized also the household of Stephanas." What this household was I gathered from Chap. xvi. 15, where the apostle says, 'Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.' Whence, I thought they could not be infants, but believers in Christ, converted and baptized by the apostle; or they could hardly be called *first fruits*, and be said to *addict themselves to the ministry of the saints*: whether we understood it of relieving their wants, or preaching the everlasting gospel.

Having thus gone through the history of baptism, as administered by the apostles, I proceeded to consider the account they give of the meaning, or spiritual design of it : and with this view compared Rom. vi. 3, 4, with Col. ii. 12, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death." Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection ; knowing this, that our old man is crucified," &c. And, in Colossians, I found the same metaphor kept up : "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith or the operation of God." In forming a judgment of the design of the Holy Ghost in these passages, I thought it necessary to consider, first, the *description*, or *character*, of the persons baptized. They are said, (Col. ii. 11) to be *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands* : which I knew not how to interpret so well of any thing, as the *renewing influences* of the Holy Ghost. Agreeably to which, they are further represented as the subjects of *that faith which is of the operation of God* : or, as it is elsewhere called, *precious faith*, and the faith of *God's elect*. II. Pet. i. 1 ; Tit. i. 1. The *metaphor* came next under consideration. They were *buried* with Christ in baptism. This seemed much better to answer to immersion, than to sprinkling or pouring ; and, supposing that the *faith* mentioned might refer to their being *buried*, as well as rising, this I thought might be the meaning of their being *planted in the likeness of Christ's death*. That as in the ordinance of the supper, there is a believing memorial of Christ's love in his sufferings and death ; so, in baptism, the saint, by an eye of faith, is called to attend to his condescension, when imprisoned in the grave ; and his glory, as a conqueror in breaking the bands of death : in each of which he sustained the character of the surety of the covenant, and head of the body. And as the actions of breaking the bread, and pouring out the wine, are expressive of his agony and death ; the immersion, and rising, of the person baptized, might refer to his burial and resurrection.

I then proceeded to examine I. Cor. vii. 14 : a text I had often heard quoted, as proving, if not in direct terms, yet by just consequence, the right of infants to baptism. The words are, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean, but now they are holy."—I began with the occasion of the words, and could find nothing relating to baptism in the context. An affair, evidently of another kind, employed the mind of the apostle, to wit, the necessity, or expediency, of attending to the duties of the marriage-relation, where one was a convert, and the other an infidel. This, I thought, was the point in view : and it stands determined, that the *wife is not to depart*, nor the *husband to put her away* ; unless some other circumstances should render it necessary and warrantable.—To remove the scruple of a tender spirit, it is added, *that the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer*. By which I could not understand an internal spiritual purity of mind ; this being the work of the Divine Spirit : but as every thing else, so the marriage-relation, is sanctified to the believer, by *the word of God and prayer*. The ignorance or enmity of the infidel would not render the saint's conscientious and faithful discharge of his duty, less necessary or acceptable.—To enforce his determination of their continuing together, the Apostle adds, *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy*. Here I considered, how children may be said to be *unclean* ; and I thought, they are all so by *nature being shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin*. The guilt and pollution of which can only be removed by the blood of Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost. As to this, I could see no difference between the seed of believers, and others. All are *concluded under sin*, and *by nature, children of wrath*.

I then remembered to have heard, that all out of the pale of the Jewish church were unclean, as opposed to that holiness which is attributed to the whole congregation of Israel ; and that such uncleanness attends the children of unconverted Gentiles now. But, considering Peter's vision, in which he is forbidden to *call that common which God hath cleansed*—That *the middle wall of partition is broken down*—That in regeneration, or the *new man*, there is nei-

ther Greek nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.—Remembering the peculiars of the Jewish church, as *hereditary* and *national*, are now utterly set aside: I could see no more uncleanness in one infant, than in another.—Upon the whole, I thought the affair settled by the apostle, wholly matrimonial. It is highly probable, the *holiness* and *uncleanness* were of the same kind; or related to apparent legitimacy, or illegitimacy.—Nor could I see, on the supposition of an external sort of holiness derived to an infant from a believing parent, that we are to conclude its right to baptism, without a special direction from the Lawgiver of the church.*

This led me to consider the apostle's account of Abraham, (Rom. iv. 11, 12, 13.) As “the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; *and* that the promise is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end it might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all: *and*, that he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had, yet being uncircumcised.” This I found commonly insisted on, to prove that Abraham's covenant was the covenant of grace—That a part of his seed were the believing Gentiles, and their offspring; and that, as Abraham's children were circumcised, the children of believers should be baptized.

To come at a certainty in this matter, I thought it might be proper carefully to inquire, what the covenant was which God made with Abraham; the duties required, and privileges to be enjoyed, under it; the persons interested in it, and the manner of conveying and signifying that interest. The covenant I found at large in the xviith of Genesis; and it appeared to me, to be of a *peculiar* kind. Some things belonging to Abraham in his *personal* character; as, that he should have a numerous posterity; that kings should descend from him; the making over the land of Canaan to him; and the particular honour of being the father of the Messiah, according to the flesh. This part of the covenant,

* If the Baptism of infants may be justified from this passage, so may the baptism of the *unbelieving* husband, and the *unbelieving* wife; for they are said to be *sanctified*, or *holy*, as well as their children.

I thought distinguishable from the covenant of grace ; for I could not but see he might have all these, without any special relation to God, as a child. But, when God promises to be *his God ; to bless him*, and, that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed* : I looked upon these promises, as expressive of privileges of another, and more valuable kind, than any of the former.

And, as the covenant appeared thus to be of a mixed nature, and the blessings distinct ; so I found his seed to be described very differently in scripture : sometimes intending *all his natural children* ; sometimes the *person* of Christ only : and here, and in other places, all his *spiritual* offspring, whether Jews or Gentiles. As to his children, who are only so after the flesh, they had their outward advantages : but not that I could see, the blessings of the covenant of grace.—As to Christ, it did not appear any blessing was derived from Abraham to him ; but, on the contrary, Abraham received the blessing in, and from the Messiah, his *root*, as well as offspring. And, as to his spiritual seed, they are all, whether Jews or Gentiles, partakers with him of the same faith and salvation.

Circumcision, I thought to be a sign, or badge, of separation to the Jews in common, as distinguished from the Gentiles ; and, perhaps of regeneration to his spiritual seed ; but conveyed, that I could see, no spiritual blessing to either. And I thought, if the baptism of infants, under the Gospel, were to be argued from circumcision, the Apostle would certainly have given some hint of it : whereas his discourse is confined to believers, without a word of their children.—That circumcision was a *seal of the righteousness of faith* to Abraham, is indeed asserted ; but that it was so to his natural seed, I could form no idea of : at least, till they had, by faith, a view of the same righteousness, by which Abraham their father was justified.—And the apostle seems to explain the whole matter ; Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. “ *They are not all Israel, which are of Israel : neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.—That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God : but the children of the promise are accounted for the seed.* ” Now, I concluded, if this were true of the natural seed of Abraham, a believer, certainly it could be no less so of the offspring of the Gentile believers.

As to the privileges of the Jews, above the Gentiles, the apostle is express. That unto them *pertained the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises* : and that from them, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.* Rom. ix. 4, 5. Or, agreeably to what he before had said, when putting the question, “*What advantage then has the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?*” He answers, “*Much every way; chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God.*” So that it evidently appeared, the church of the Jews had its glory; but as the same apostle tells us, (II Cor. iii. 10, 11,) This was as *no glory if compared with the glory which excelleth. For, if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.* That is, as I understand it, all the carnal part of the Jewish glory was swallowed up, and utterly set aside, by the simplicity, spirituality, and liberty of the Gospel-dispensation: and as formerly, “*All were not Israel which were of Israel;*” so now, “*he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*” Rom. ii. 28, 29.

I then proceeded to consider the excision of the Jews and the taking in of the Gentiles, (recorded Romans xi. 16, 17,) which, though there is no express mention, either of the baptism of infants, or of baptism itself; yet I found commonly produced, as a declaration of a federal holiness, conveyed from parents to children, in consequence of which they *might, yea ought*, to be baptized. The words of the text are, “*If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches: and if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree,*” &c.—That converted Gentiles stand on a level with believing Jews, I had already seen. That the peculiar form of the Jewish church was abolished at the death of Christ I found generally acknowledged; that being the *ministration which was to be done away*, to make room for that *which was to remain*, so that I could not tell how to conceive of the Gospel-Church incorporated with the Jewish, they being always

represented as distinct, or distinguishable, the one from the other. By the *root*, then, I understood Abraham.—By the *wild olive*, the Gentiles in a natural state; who, upon receiving the grace of God, became the spiritual branches of Abraham the father of the faithful; and were equally interested with his believing natural branches, in all the special privileges of the covenant of grace. This I thought to be the most natural sense of the text: nor could I see how this could have any relation to Baptism, whether of the adult, or infants.

The next reference to Baptism I found, was, I Cor. x. 1, 2. “I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea.” To understand this, I thought it proper to enquire into the fact, as recorded by Moses, which I thought would give light to the allusion. And, (in Ex. xiv.) we are told, that “the pillar of the cloud went from before the face of the Israelites, and stood behind them: *that* it came between the camp of the Egyptians, and the camp of Israel; *that* it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and gave light by night to the other; *that* the Lord caused the sea to go back, by a strong east wind, all that night, and made the sea dry land; *and that* the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them, on the right hand, and on the left.” Here I found, that part of the cloud which was next to the Israelites, was bright, clear, and comfortable; nor the least intimation of *rain* falling upon them. The sea was made *dry ground*, and the waters were a *wall* unto them, on the right hand, and on the left. So that I concluded, the term *baptized* must refer to their situation in the *midst* of the sea, encompassed by these walls, and attended with the cloud; rather than to any water coming out of the one, or sprinkling dashings from the other: which must have been very troublesome to such a body of people in their march; and, as I thought, inconsistent with the account of their standing in, and coming out of the sea, on *dry ground*.

This brought me to the last place of scripture, which speaks directly to the nature and meaning of the ordinance of Baptism; I Pet. iii. 20, 21. “The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a pre-

paring, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Here it appeared, that there were some circumstances attending the ark, and the salvation of Noah and his family by water, which were figurative, or typical, of Baptism ; and when I examined the account, as given by Moses, (Gen. vii.) I found it thus : The ark was God's contrivance and appointment ; and it was a large, hollow vessel, in which Noah, his family, and the creatures with him, were for a time, as it were, buried : and especially this was the case, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and they in the midst of that deluge which destroyed all the world. This appeared to me to answer to *immersion* in Baptism ; and I could not think the Holy Ghost would refer us to the water of a *flood*, as a type of a little quantity of that element, made use of when *poured*, or *sprinkled*, on the face of an infant. And as Noah and his family were saved by water, the believer is saved by Baptism ; not efficaciously, or meritoriously, but declaratively and instrumentally. In the profession of his faith, he declares his entrance into Christ, as the ark of salvation ; and his Baptism is a lively representation of the burial and resurrection of him, who died for his offences, and rose again for his justification. And as Noah built the ark, and entered into it, in obedience to the command of God ; the believer is baptized, from a principle of *conscience* toward God ; yea a *good*, that is, as I thought, an enlightened, renewed *conscience*.

Having thus gone through the Scripture account of the ordinance of Baptism, I found myself obliged to conclude, that the balance was greatly on the side of *believers*, as the only declared subjects ; and of *plunging*, or *immersion*, as the only mode of that sacred institution.

I well knew that many godly and learned persons thought otherwise ; but, not daring to call any man Master on earth, and remembering the account I must shortly give to him, who said, *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness* ; I determined to comply with my duty ; and, on the closest reflection, have seen no reason to repent of it.

EXTRACTS

FROM LEARNED PÆDOBAPTIST AUTHORS.

WITSIUS : “ It cannot be denied, that the native signification of the word *baptize*, is to *plunge*, to *dip*.” *Æcon. Fœd.* l. iv. c. xvi. § 13.

VENEMA : “ The word *baptize* is no where used in the Scripture for *sprinkling* : no, not in *Mark* vii. 4.” *Hist. Eccles.* tom. iii. secul. i. § 138.

J. ALTINGIUS : “ *Washings* the Apostle calls *divers baptisms* : that is *various immersions*. For baptism is *immersion*, when the whole body is immersed : but the term *baptism* is never used concerning *aspersion*.—Those Jewish washings were manifold as, of the *high-priest* ; (Lev. xvi. 9) of the *priests*, at their consecration ; (Exod. xxix. 4 ; Lev. viii. 6) and of the *Levites*, when appointed to their office ; (Num. viii. 7. 21) of all *Israel*, when the covenant was to be promulgated ; (Exod. xix. 10. 14) especially of those that were defiled by the *carcase* of an unclean animal ; (Lev. xi.) by the *leprosy* ; (Lev. xiv.) by a flux of the *semen*, or of the *menstrua*, or by touching *things* that were so defiled ; (Lev. xv.) Those also, who had been concerned in the purification of others, were to be cleansed by baptism. For instance, he who had led the scape-goat into the wilderness ; (Lev. xvi. 26,) those who had burnt the bullock, or the goat, without the camp, the blood of which was brought into the holy place ; (Lev. xvi. 28,) the priest who burned the red heifer, and the man who gathered the ashes ; (Num. xix. 7. 10,) and also soldiers, when returned from war.” *Comment. in Epist. ad Heb. cap. ix.* 10. In *The Principles of Antipædobaptism, and the Practice of Female Communion, completely consistent*, (published by Mr. J. DORE,) pp. 75, 76, 77.

Dr. G. CAMPBELL : “ The word βαπτίζειν, *baptize*, both in Sacred Writers and Classical, signifies to *dip*, to *plunge*, to *immerse* ; and was rendered by TERTULLIAN, the oldest of the Latin Fathers, *tingere*, the term used for dyeing cloth ; which was by immersion. It is always construed suitably to this meaning.” *Translation of the Four Gospels.* Note, Matt iv. 11.

Dr. T. GOODWIN : “ The eminent thing signified and represented in baptism, is, not simply the blood of Christ, as it *washeth* us from sin ; but there is a farther representation therein of Christ’s *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection*, in the baptized’s being first buried under water, and then rising out of it : and this is not in a bare conformity unto Christ, but in a representation of a communion *with* Christ, in that his death and resurrection. Therefore it is said, *We are BURIED WITH HIM in baptism* : and, *Wherein you are RISEN WITH HIM.*” *Chris. set forth.* pp. 82, 83.

VENEMA : “ It is without controversy, that baptism in the

primitive church was administered by immersion into water and not by sprinkling. Matt. iii. ; John iii. ; Acts viii. ; Rom. vi.

—Nor is there any necessity to have recourse to the idea of sprinkling, in our interpretation of Acts ii. 41 ; where *three thousand souls* are said to be added to Christ by baptism : seeing it might be performed by immersion, equally as by aspersion ; especially, as they are not said to have been baptized at the same time.” *Hist. Eccles.* tom iii. secul. i. § 138.

Dr. WHITBY : “ It being so expressly declared here, [Rom. vi. 4,] and Coloss. ii. 12, that we are *BURIED with Christ in baptism*, by being buried under water ; and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death, by dying to sin, being taken hence ; and *this immersion being religiously observed by ALL CHRISTIANS FOR THIRTEEN CENTURIES*, and approved by our church, and the change of it into sprinkling, even without any allowance from the Author of this institution, or any license from any council of the church, being that which the Romanist still urgeth to justify his refusal of the cup to the laity ; it were to be wished, that this custom might be again of general use, and aspersion only permitted, as of old, in case of the Clergy, or in present danger of death.” *Note on Rom. vi. 4.*

Dr. WALL : “ All those countries in which the usurped power of the Pope is, or has formerly been, owned, have *LEFT OFF* dipping of children in the font : but—*all other countries in the world* which had never regarded his authority, *do still use it.*” In *Pædobap. Exam.* vol. i. pp. 289, 290.

VIERINGA : “ It is not related as a fact, in the Gospels and Acts of the primitive church, that infants were baptized by Christ, or by the apostles.” *Observat. Sac.* l. ii. c. vi. § 2.

Mr. R. BAXTER : “ If there can be no example given in Scripture, of any one that was baptized without the profession of a Saving faith, nor any precept for so doing ; then must we not baptize any without it. But the antecedent is true ; therefore so is the consequent.” *Disputat. of Right to Sac.* p. 149. First Edition.

SALMASIUS AND SUICERUS : “ In the two first centuries no one was baptized, except, being instructed in the faith, and acquainted with the true doctrine of Christ, he was able to profess himself a believer ; because of those words, *He that believeth and is baptized.*”

CURCELLÆUS : “ The baptism of Infants, in the two first centuries after Christ, was altogether unknown—The custom of baptizing infants did not begin before the third age after Christ was born.”

DE LA ROQUE : “ The primitive church did not baptize infants ; and the learned GROTIUS proves it, in his Annotations on the Gospel.” The three last Extracts from *Pædobap. Exam.* vol. II. chap. ii. pp. 76, 77.

*Extracted from the Baptist Magazine for December, 1824,
pp. 517, 518.*

The learned J. D. Michaelis in his *Entwurf der typischen Gottesgelartheit*. Gottingen, 1753, p. 148, &c., speaking of Baptism as an image of the death and resurrection of Christ, which signified that God would impute the sufferings and death of Christ to him that believed and was baptized; he adds,

“If then an adult, a Jew for example, was to be baptized, and I should translate the language of the action into words, it would be in the following confession:—

“I acknowledge that I have been a very great sinner, and as impure as a heathen or an idolater; and that I have no title to the kingdom of God, on the ground of my birth and ancestry. And although God, in his grace, hath promised a blessing to the seed of Abraham, yet I confess that hitherto I have not been a son of Abraham. For, although naturally I am descended from him, yet I am not a son of the promise, and I believe that to these only the promise belongs. All my former religion, I acknowledge, was false; and so false, that it was insufficient to obtain eternal happiness. On account of my sins, I am not only unclean and miserable, but, also exposed to punishment, and liable to the sorrows and death which are represented in Christian baptism. But I believe that God, in his grace, imputes to me the sufferings and death of Christ, as if I had myself endured them; and even as I shall now pass through the image of death, which fully took place in Christ, so God views me, as if I had suffered punishment, and had died on account of all my sins: and, I am certain, that God will not require from me the punishment of my sins *twice*. I believe, also, that God looks upon me as if I had already suffered death, and was raised up to immortal life, even as Christ was raised: and, I believe, that before God, and with respect to my spiritual condition, in his sight, I have all the privileges of a citizen of the future world; that is, the complete forgiveness of sins, and freedom from the law of Moses.”

MICHAELIS adds, “The duties which follow from hence, which Paul, in Rom. ch. vi. points out, I pass over, because they are not the immediate signification of Baptism but the consequences of that signification.”

This passage needs no comment. It is a forcible representation, and shows that *Michaelis* considered the baptism of an adult as a declaration that the imputation of the death of Christ to him, was the ground of his hope, and his baptism was, by the fact itself, a profession of his faith.

ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY THE
HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL,
ON THE
OCCASION OF HIS PUBLIC BAPTISM.
AUGUST 9, 1849.

THE usual introductory services having been gone through, Mr. Noel entered the pulpit and spoke as follows :—

HAVING been asked, my brethren, to address you on this occasion, I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of speaking a few words on this particular point: *Why a person who is unbaptized should be baptized, after having made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ in other ways, and perhaps for many years.* I have not come to the resolution to obey what I believe to be Christ's command, without having fully considered the grounds upon which that step is to be taken. Without having read anything whatever in favour of the exclusive right of believers to Christian baptism, I have read all the strongest arguments that I could meet with upon the other side. I believe I have weighed well every considerable argument that has ever been adduced in the maintenance of infant baptism, as an addition to, and which evidently becomes a substitution for, the baptism of believers in Christian Churches; and I have come distinctly to two conclusions, which appear to me, at least, to be certain. I will not speak of the convictions of others, but I speak of the conviction of my own

mind, after very much examination. It appears to me to be distinctly proved,—first, that baptism, as ordained by Christ, is an immersion in water, a being buried in the water; and, secondly, that the immersion is meant to be a profession of faith in Christ. If those two conclusions are correct (*and I believe they will completely prevail with the Christian world eventually*), then it follows that a person who, like myself, has only been sprinkled in infancy, is unbaptized; because such a person has neither been immersed, nor has he made a baptismal profession of faith; and these two things constitute Christian baptism. So that, if these conclusions are correct, then I, and others, who have been only sprinkled in infancy, are in neither sense baptized.

Should we, then, after having professed our faith in Christ many times at the Lord's table, come to this, which is the initiatory rite of Christianity, and begin again a profession of faith in him? There are these reasons which have led me to conclude so for myself, and which have led, I believe, some of my brethren and sisters, who are about to be baptized, to the same conclusion. In the first place, there is no instance in the New Testament of any person unbaptized, after the institution of Christian baptism by our Lord, coming to the Lord's table; and therefore, if we should continue to attend the Lord's table without being baptized, knowing that Pædo-baptism is not the baptism appointed by Christ, we should be doing contrary to all the precedents of the New Testament. In the next place, Christ has required a baptismal profession of faith. It does not appear to me to be sufficient to say that we have confessed Christ in other ways. That may be true; but there is no reason why one confession of Christ, appointed by him, should be taken as the substitute of another confession, appointed likewise by him; and, therefore, as he has said to us, as well as to others, "Repent and be baptized for the remission

of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost ;” “ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ;” therefore, he requires from us a baptismal profession of faith, as well as a profession of faith in other ways. This has been so clearly seen by the Churches of Christ in general, that it is not only those which are called Baptist Churches, but all the Churches, who refuse to admit to the Lord’s Supper, or into church membership, any whom they consider to be unbaptized. If a man—for instance, one of the Society of Friends—has been a consistent Christian for years, has followed the Lord diligently and zealously, has done good by his pen and by his preaching, and is welcomed by all persons who rejoice in seeing the work of the Spirit as a thorough Christian,—if that person should come to recognise that the sacraments are still obligatory, and that he should come to the table of the Lord, there is no Church that would receive him unbaptized. Neither the Roman Catholic, nor the Anglican, nor the Presbyterian, nor the Independent Churches, would receive such a one, unbaptized. And, therefore, the fact of his having made a profession of faith in other ways has not appeared to any of the Churches of Christ as a reason why an unbaptized person should not, at any point in his heavenward course, be baptized, when he comes to recognise his error.

Our blessed Saviour has set us an example in this matter. At the age of thirty, when he was known by all who knew him to be devoted to God—when his whole life was a profession of devotedness, not in the least requiring baptism, as an expression either of repentance or of faith—when John was baptizing converts, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand, summoning men to believe in Christ as the Saviour about to appear—then it was that Jesus, not certainly needing to be baptized unto faith in himself, and needing no repentance, was yet at that age baptized, after long years

of piety. This he did, because he would honour the ordinance of God, not needing it himself, but with a view to the welfare of others and the honour of God. He was therefore baptized. Is there not much analogy between the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, and the baptism of any disciple, if his soul, after some years of faith, perceives that he has been ignorant in this matter, and has not understood the doctrine of Christian baptism? When we add to this the reason which Christ assigned why he was baptized, we see that his authority directly recommends, sanctions, and (as I think) commands, that those who find out that they are unbaptized, because only sprinkled in infancy, should, like Jesus, be afterwards baptized. He said, when John remonstrated with Him as superior to himself and not needing to be baptized by him, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He did not mean that there was anything especially righteous, especially great, especially devoted, in being baptized; but that it was comparatively a trivial thing, as it seems to me, that it was a light duty compared with many, as compared with faith and devotedness. It was but the external profession. Nevertheless, he says, "It becometh us to fulfil the least command as well as the greatest!" When, therefore, our Lord assigned this as a reason, why he, not needing it, should yet be baptized, he said in effect to all his followers: "You may think that having made a profession in other ways, you need it not,—that you have confessed Christ at the table of the Lord, or in your intercourse with the world; nevertheless, it becometh us to 'fulfil all righteousness,' to keep all the commands of Christ, to honour every ordinance that God has given; and if you need it not for yourselves, at least in respect to His authority be baptized, that you may express your willingness to be obedient to him in all things." In looking, too, at the example of our Saviour, I have seen

that he regarded the influence of his act on others. for we never stand alone in our conduct. Others may be influenced by us for good or evil, and we have, as Christians, to recommend our fellow-sinners—those who have as yet not turned “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God”—to believe, and to be baptized, as a profession of that faith. Now, if we were ourselves unbaptized, they would naturally evade the command of Christ, and say, “You do not submit to this publicity, you do not acknowledge this ordinance, you have escaped this pain, and therefore why should not we?” And they would be disposed to evade a command of Christ under the sanction of our example. And this is especially true of ministers, whose business it is to preach Christ to the unconverted, and to preach baptism to those who may turn to him in truth. But how can a minister urge his fellow-sinners to be baptized if he is himself an unbaptized person? Besides, it being a minister’s duty to administer this ordinance to those who are prepared for it and desire it, a scruple and doubt might arise in the minds of many, perhaps perplexing them with many troubles in long years, if they should be baptized by an unbaptized minister. It seemed to me, therefore, necessary for others, no less than expedient for myself, that I should fulfil this command of Christ.

There is one other argument, to which I have already alluded, which has had weight with me, and, I doubt not, with others of my brethren and sisters now about to be baptized. In common with almost all other Churches of Christ, there are those Baptist Churches who are of strict communion, and who believe, in common with the great majority of Christians, that they must not receive to the Lord’s Supper those who are in their view unbaptized. I believe this to be an error, but, since it is shared by them in common with almost all Churches, it is only to be respected as an opinion,

and not to be condemned as a fault. Consequently, each Christian ought to desire to be in full communion with those Churches. They are not more narrow in their minds than other Christians, because almost all Christians are of the same opinion; and, consequently, we ought not to shrink from their communion, but seek it. Let me add to this, that I believe, amongst the multitude of those who, as ministers of Christ, have seen it right to renounce the doctrine of infant baptism, as an abuse in the Church, which has no sanction in Scripture, there are very few, if any, who have not also felt it their duty to be baptized. On these grounds, it has seemed to me to be my duty not to shrink from a public acknowledgment of Christ's authority, but with my brethren around to be baptized, to acknowledge that He has a right to our subjection. The meaning of the rite is, however, far more important. My dear friend, the minister in this chapel (Mr. Shepherd), has just brought some of its prominent features before our minds. Let me add to what he has said, by referring to a paper which I have drawn up, expressive of my own feelings,—the feelings, I doubt not, of those about to be baptized, and which, I trust, may be your feelings too:—

“O Lord God Almighty, I accept with humble gratitude—as a sinner who has deserved eternal death, and who cannot cease to deserve it—the rich, free, and eternal salvation which thou in thy goodness hast provided for me. I look to thee, O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to save me from the punishment of sin and its power; from the curse which thy law has justly pronounced upon me; from my own faults; from all temptations: and to bring me to a life of holy bliss in heaven, because thou hast promised all this to those who come to thee, as I now do, through Christ. In dependence on the merit of thy Son Jesus Christ—upon the aid of thy Spirit and on thy truth, I look to thee

for the eternal salvation of my body and of my soul ; and I humbly accept thee as my chief guide to all eternity. O God, the Son, my Redeemer, who didst expiate my sins by thy death, thou wast made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in thee ; thou hast redeemed me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me, and having rescued me from eternal death by thy death, thou dost now live to bring me to eternal life. Believing in thy power and love, I trust to thy merit and intercession to secure for me the favour of God, to impart to me thy Holy Spirit, to enrich me with all the blessings of the new covenant, and to prepare me for heaven ; and thus I accept thee as my only and all-sufficient Saviour. Through Christ I likewise thankfully receive thee, O God the Spirit, to be my sanctifier. For his sake thou dost dwell with those who believe in him ; and believing on him, I look to thee to teach me all needful truth, to incline my heart to what is just and right, to set my affections on God and on spiritual things, to direct and control my will, to form my character, to sanctify me wholly, to preserve me through all temptations, and to bring me into the presence of my Redeemer in glory. Thus, I heartily accept thee, O God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as my shield and my exceeding great reward, and I humbly trust, according to thy promises, to be made happy by thee for both worlds. On the other hand, being so blessed and favoured, I, as a redeemed and pardoned transgressor, desire to make a public profession of faith in thee, and publicly to dedicate myself to thy service, according to Christ's appointment, by immersion. First, I renounce all sin for ever. By my sins I have displeased and dishonoured thee ; they have checked my efforts to improve my character, they have hindered me from doing good, they have injured my peace and usefulness, they have been my disgrace, and but for thy mercy, they

would have been my ruin. I have been unreasonable, corrupt and ungrateful in disobeying thee, and am brought by nature and by practice to such a condition, that nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ could blot out my guilt. Thou hast so hated sin, that thou hast sentenced sinners to eternal death, and unless Jesus Christ had suffered for it they could not have been saved. It is unnatural, depraved, and rebellious, exposing them to thy just wrath and curse; it has occasioned the death of Christ, it has made the world hate him, it opposes his dominion; he came to rescue us from its power, and he feels an irreconcilable hatred to it. It is contrary to the nature of the influence of the Holy Spirit, by whom it is progressively destroyed in each believer, and by whom it must ultimately be eradicated from the world. Thy word condemns it. It is worse in thy children than in others, because they must sin against clearer light and repeated promises, after experiencing the aids of grace, and after tasting the pleasure of obedience. I therefore desire to forsake it for ever, and thenceforth to do, say, and think nothing which is contrary to thy will. As Christ died for my sins, and was buried in the grave, so shall I be buried in the water, in token that I die with him to the sins which caused his death, that I may never again serve sin. At the same time, I mean, by thy help, to lead a new life. As Christ rose from the grave, so shall I rise from the water to a nobler and better life than before. Thou didst not give my faculties to be wasted in aimless inactivity, but, rescued from active corruption, to be employed in all that is useful and ennobling. Henceforth, my opinion and judgment of things being formed by a supreme regard to thy will, I desire to cherish every right principle, to pursue every honourable and useful end, to do what is just and true, what is humane and benevolent, to set my affections on all that is the most worthy to engage them, to love all that is good, to

seek holiness and heaven, to live for eternity and look to thee to be directed in all things by thy Word, to be conformed to the example of Christ, and to aim at being perfect, as my Father in Heaven is perfect. As Christ my Redeemer is in Heaven, I will set my affections there; as he is holy, just, and good there, I will endeavour to be so here; as he glorifies thee there, I will seek to glorify thee here; as he loves believers, I will love them; and as he is head over all things to the Church, I will live to serve the Church; and thus, by thy help, I will rise with Christ to a new life.

“Further, as I am about to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—that is, to profess, by immersion, that I am thy worshipper and servant, I now consecrate myself to thy service for ever, I give myself unreservedly to thee, O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Relying on thy mercy to accept me through Christ, and on the aid of thy Spirit to enable me to adhere to my resolution, thy will, O God, shall be mine; I mean to please thee in all things; I count thy enemies, my enemies; thy friends, my friends. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Only make me know thy will, and by thy help I will do it; thou art my owner, and to please and serve thee shall be my highest end. I give myself also unreservedly to thee, my gracious and loving Saviour, who art one in nature, design, and feeling, with thy Father. As thou hast lived and died for me, I wish to live for thee; as thou wilt give me glory in heaven, I desire to give thee glory on earth. Before long I hope to see thee in thy kingdom; meanwhile, may I love, serve, trust, and delight in thee, as my ever-present Redeemer. To obey thy commands, to copy thy example, to promote thy cause, to help thy servants, to honour thee, in the use of all my faculties, possessions, and time; all this is my fixed intention, by the aid of thy Spirit. Thou hast bought me by thy blood. I am thine. Further, I give

myself to thee, O Holy Spirit of God. It is my desire and purpose to be led by thy teaching and to be conformed to thy will. May thy holy influence surround me wherever I may be ! May I never grieve thee by neglect or sin, by hardness or unbelief, but may I be immersed in a flood of light and love, as the three disciples were immersed in the bright cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration. May I be baptized in thee ! Pervade all my faculties ; consecrate my whole being to thyself.

“ Since I have thus been enabled to believe, O Lord God, and am about to profess my faith by immersion into thy name, I look to thee to fulfil the promises which thou hast made to me in thy Word. Jesus, when on earth, said, He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ;—receive me, therefore, now, and own me at the last day, as one of thy pardoned and accepted children. Thy Apostle once said to an anxious multitude : ‘ Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ;’—repenting of all my sins, and being about to be baptized in token of that repentance, may I have the assurance that my sins are removed, and be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise to the end. My righteousness must ever continue like filthy rags, and each day I must need thy forgiveness. Now, therefore, I desire, by being baptized in the name of Christ, to express my dependence on His merit and mediation, to assume by faith the robe of His righteousness, and to be one of those of whom the Apostle Paul has said, ‘ As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.’ Look on me as one who depends on Him alone ; let His righteousness be imputed to me : let it hide from thee all my guilt. Thus engaged in thy ennobling service, with a happy assurance that I am thy adopted child, may I have that joy and peace in believing which in the case of others has followed this open confession of Christ.

As on the day of Pentecost, three thousand who were baptized were filled with gladness—as the jailer and his family rejoiced believing in thee, on the night of their baptism—and as the Ethiopian treasurer, after receiving baptism, went on his way rejoicing—so may I, in thus putting on the uniform of Christ as His soldier, experience such joy and peace in believing, as all the trials of life shall not be able to destroy. In this profession, may I, through thy grace, be steadfast to the end of my life, and only grow stronger in faith as nature decays. Finally, as I am about to be received into the communion of saints, as a member of a Christian Church, assist me to live answerably to this privilege. Make me to love my brethren, and to be loved by them in return. Never may I sow discord among those whom Divine Grace has united; but, on the contrary, be a peace-maker among those whom human infirmity separates. Never may I envy the gifts and the graces of my companions, but feel humble gratitude to thee for every manifestation of thy goodness to them or to myself. Make me according to my ability to promote the happiness of the Church of which I shall form a part, cheerfully sharing in every evangelical labour, contributing to every work of benevolence, and uniting my prayers with the prayers of thy people, for a copious effusion of thy Spirit upon us all.

“Finally, may the memory of this solemn baptism refresh me during all my future course. If ever I am tempted to backslide, may these solemn vows occasion deep contrition, and recal me to fidelity; and when I reflect that I have thus heartily consecrated myself to thy service, may I feel disposed to renew this act of consecration with more entire devotedness, and with more triumphant faith. Now unto thee, who art able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy; to Thee, the only wise God our Saviour, be glory

and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Now, my beloved brethren, all may not see it to be their duty to make this profession, or enter into this covenant with God by baptism; but I am sure every person taught of God, living for eternity, really converted will feel the necessity of making essentially this profession before God. Let us all be united in that, and if there are any here who have been only attracted by a spectacle, and only came out of curiosity, may they listen to what my dear friend (Mr. Shepherd) has already said. It is too solemn a thing to trifle about this salvation of the soul; and if you see others that are in earnest about it, go to your homes this evening, and put up a prayer to God that you may be earnest too. Whether you think us right or wrong in this particular act, you know that it is right to care for the soul; you know that it is right to serve God; you know that it is right to seek eternity. Go and do that you know to be right. Go and ask God for grace to live for him; and then, whether after examination you come to the conviction that it is your duty to be baptized, or not, we may meet in glory, owned as the disciples of Jesus Christ, and may hold familiar fellowship and brotherhood with one another, while we are fellow-soldiers and fellow-pilgrims on the earth.

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